

S.B. NO. 1 (Plain)

METROPOLITAN POLICE

Special Report }
1

SPECIAL BRANCH

28th day of October, 1968.

SUBJECT

The Autumn
Offensive -
27th October
Demonstration.

Reference to Papers

346/68/15

During recent years the emotive Vietnam War issue has provided political extremists in this country with a ready-made line of communication with the broad mass of "militant pacifists" here. Of these extremists the trotskyist-dominated VIETNAM SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN has emerged as the most influential body. The secret of its success undoubtedly lies in its ability to use this issue, allied with an uncompromising anti-American attitude, as a catalyst in welding together the various factions and individuals with strong views on war in general and the Vietnam War in particular.

The VIETNAM SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN was to a considerable extent responsible for the violence which occurred at demonstrations in London in October, 1967, and in March and July, 1968. Following this last demonstration the Campaign announced its intention of holding a week of activity on the Vietnam War issue in the third week of October, termed "THE AUTUMN OFFENSIVE". Planning for the demonstration was immediately commenced under the guidance of an ad hoc committee claiming initially to represent twenty six political, student and trade union organisations (see Appendix "A"). The committee was dominated by trotskyists.

With such a wide variety of ideologically different factions involved it was inevitable that dissension would ensue and from the start it was obvious that the extremists' plans were being hampered by internal conflict over the question of violence being deliberately used as a tactical weapon to bring about a breakdown in law and order.

that the main proponents were roughly split between those (the trotskyists) who felt that perhaps the time was not yet right for the use of violence, those (the Maoists) who felt that violence was not only inevitable but desirable in the circumstances, and those (the communists and their allies) who wanted an orderly demonstration.

Although the basic conflict was more over tactics than over strategy the Maoists immediately started a campaign of lobbying support for their very extreme views whilst the trotskyists continued to pay lip-service to the concept of an orderly demonstration and refused to commit themselves publicly to the calculated use of violence. This internecine quarrelling resulted in the Campaign disowning two of its branches which had come under the control of Maoists and/or anarchists (the

[REDACTED]

Page No. 2.

latter had to some extent aligned themselves with the former) and in the Maoists forming their own rival ad hoc body, the OCTOBER 27th COMMITTEE FOR SOLIDARITY WITH VIETNAM, to organise more militant activity on the day of the demonstration.

Following the split, the VIETNAM SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN AD HOC COMMITTEE comprised nineteen representatives of the main bodies supporting its line and although the actual personalities representing each organisation were not always the same throughout, the main leaders emerged as:

INTERNATIONAL MARXIST GROUP OF TROTSKYISTS

Edward GUITON (In the later stages retired from the scene because of sickness)
 [REDACTED] (Replaced GUITON, above)

Pat JORDAN

[REDACTED]

Ernie TATE

INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM GROUP OF TROTSKYISTS

[REDACTED]

Chris HARMAN

[REDACTED]

VIETNAM SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN

[REDACTED]

STOP IT COMMITTEE

[REDACTED]

COMMUNIST PARTY

[REDACTED]

AUSTRALIANS AND NEW ZEALANDERS AGAINST WAR

[REDACTED]

INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY

[REDACTED]

UNCERTAIN AFFILIATION

Tariq ALI

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Page No. 3.

On the Maoist side, the leading lights of the OCTOBER 27th COMMITTEE FOR SOLIDARITY WITH VIETNAM emerged as:

Albert MANCHANDA

Privacy

Narpal Singh BRAR

Edward DAVOREN

Privacy

Adolfo OLASOCHA

Privacy

It was in this antagonistic atmosphere, with each faction vying with the other, that final plans for the demonstration were made.

Certain sections of the national press kept up the temperature with a spate of speculative and alarmist articles which made great play of the many extreme, and sometimes wild, suggestions put forward by the demonstration's planners or their supporters, and remembering the part played by foreign students in the V.S.C. demonstration of 17th March, on the probability of similar participation in this demonstration. The public pronouncements of the ubiquitous Tariq ALI were given a great deal of publicity, particularly his "promise" that the demonstration would be orderly if police stayed away.

A particularly persistent threat made by the demonstrators was that of occupying Government and diplomatic premises. During the weeks leading up to the demonstration a list of likely "targets" most of which were under consideration by the demonstrators was drawn up (see appendix "B") and police protection and advice was given to each.

Notice was taken of, and police counter measures put into effect on many other suggestions and threats made by the organisers or their supporters before the 27th October. It seemed reasonable to assume as the event drew near that considerable public disorder, whether condoned by the organisers or not, was likely to occur.

In August, Chief Constables were circularised regarding groups of potential demonstrators travelling to London and in the weeks leading up to the demonstration, information from provincial forces indicated that arrangements had been made for some 5,000 demonstrators from outside London to attend. Although measures were taken for police to act upon any information concerning the transportation of offensive weapons, an article published in the extremist magazine "Black Dwarf" on 15th October, warned coach parties of the likelihood of being stopped and searched by police and there were various indications that weapons would be brought to the Capital by parties

Page 1

travelling separately from the main group. On the day a coach was stopped at Surbiton which resulted in three of the passengers being arrested for possessing offensive weapons, and a coach stopped at Farnborough, Kent, resulted in a further two arrests.

It had at first been announced by the organisers that the "Offensive" was to span the week beginning 21st October. In fact, activity during that week was virtually non-existent, and the first manifestation of the demonstration did not show itself until the night of Friday, 25th October. That night students at the London School of Economics occupied the College and declared that they would remain there until at least the evening of 27th October. The School premises were to be used as a haven for demonstrators fleeing from the police, and as a surgery for any injured in the demonstration. (A number of full-time and trainee doctors belonging to the SOCIALIST MEDICAL ASSOCIATION made their services available). In the next two days, the School was used as an information and discussion centre by a growing number of provincial and foreign students who had travelled to London for the demonstration and a seminar which was to have been held at Trafalgar Square under the auspices of the RADICAL STUDENT ALLIANCE was instead held at the School.

On Saturday, 26th October, about 20 to 30 members of CHURCH sat in the U.S. Naval Chapel, North Audley Street, and upon refusing to vacate the premises later in the day, were locked in for that night. They remained there throughout the demonstration on 27th October but caused no disorder, and left later in the day.

During the 26th of October and that part of the following day prior to the start of the demonstration, a number of intending demonstrators were arrested for various offences in the M.P.D. (see Appendix "E"). Most were for possessing offensive weapons but the following were of particular interest:

Privacy a German national, was arrested at St. Pancras railway Station when he was found in possession of a gas pistol, ammunition and cannabis resin.

Privacy was arrested when he was found trying to gain entry to the stables at Hammersmith Police Station. It is probable that he intended tampering with the police horses stabled there.

On the evening of 26th October two youths were stopped by police in Green Street, W.I., and found to be in possession of radio-jamming equipment and perspex eye shields. Correspondence which they had made it clear that they were Maoists from Nottingham and Derby respectively and that they had intended taking part in the demonstration on the following day. Their aim seemed to be the jamming of police radio communications. Both were arrested and charged with conspiracy to cause a public mischief.

Thus the scene was set for the main demonstration on 27th October. In fact, although disorder ensued, for the most part on the South side of Grosvenor Square and in South Audley Street, the demonstrators were never able to break the police cordon at that junction and very much less violence occurred than had been anticipated.

The events of Sunday began quietly with groups of demonstrators marching from various points in London to the Victoria Embankment, near Charing Cross Underground Station, where they joined other demonstrators who had been gathering there since 11 a.m.

These minor marches comprised:-

Thirteen members of the EAST LONDON ACTION COUNCIL who marched from Stepney Town Hall.

About 40 supporters of the CAMDEN COMMITTEE FOR PEACE IN VIETNAM, who marched from South End Green, N.W.3.

Some 20 members of the SOUTH EAST LONDON AD HOC COMMITTEE (of the V.S.C.) who marched from Camberwell Green.

About 30 HACKNEY YOUNG LIBERALS, who marched from Whitehall Place, S.W.1.

About 30 members of the NORTH WEST LONDON AD HOC COMMITTEE (of the V.S.C.) who marched from Henrietta Street, W.C.2.

About 30 members of AUSTRALIANS AND NEW ZEALANDERS AGAINST THE WAR IN VIETNAM, who marched from Cambridge Circus.

Some 100 supporters of the NOTTING HILL BRANCH (of the V.S.C.) who marched from outside Marlborough Street Magistrates' Court.

About 100 members of the INDIAN WORKERS' ASSOCIATION who marched from the Strand.

Approximately 650 supporters of INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM who marched from the South Bank, near County Hall.

There was no untoward incident at any of these minor demonstrations.

By 1.45 p.m. some 25,000 demonstrators had assembled on the Embankment, the column stretching from Charing Cross to the Temple Underground Station.

Accompanied by police, the demonstrators moved off slowly at 2.10 p.m. and headed by a banner inscribed - "OCT 27 AD HOC COMMITTEE", followed the route:

New Bridge Street
Ludgate Circus
Fleet Street
Strand

Page No. 8.

Charing Cross
Whitehall
Parliament Square
Broad Sanctuary
Victoria Street
Grosvenor Gardens
Grosvenor Place
Park Lane (North Bound) to
Speakers' Corner.

In Fleet Street, several fireworks exploded whilst the head of the procession was passing the "Daily Telegraph" and "Daily Express" offices.

At Australia House, where it had been feared that the first clash would occur, the demonstrators largely confined themselves to shouting anti-Australian slogans and booing. The most extreme gesture made was that of burning an Australian flag, an action which aroused some 6 or 7 Australian by-standers into unsuccessfully attempting to rescue the flag before it was totally consumed. Apart from a brief scuffle between this group and the demonstrators, there was no disorder and the march continued along the Strand.

The head of the procession reached Trafalgar Square at 3.20 p.m. when Tariq Ali used amplifier apparatus, to urge the marchers to walk slowly down Whitehall and not go to the American Embassy. However, some 500 Maoist supporters and members of the Britain-Vietnam Solidarity Front did leave the main march and went along Cockspur Street (see page 8).

At Downing Street, fireworks were again exploded, a Union Jack was burned and Tariq Ali handed in a petition at No. 10. (Copy attached at Appendix "J").

At the Cenotaph the column halted while a mock coffin, covered by a white cloth on which were the words 'unknown Vietnamese', and bunches of flowers, were placed on the Cenotaph steps.

Some few minutes later, a young marcher attempted to climb the east side of the Cenotaph and remove a flag, but was restrained by another demonstrator, while a coloured man climbed the west side and affixed a black flag, to the cheers of the demonstrators.

The marchers then continued on their way and at New Scotland Yard, another anticipated flash point, they confined themselves merely to clapping and cheering police guarding the building.

On reaching the end of Victoria Street, about 1,000 anarchists succeeded in getting to the head of the march by making a hurried detour through Stag Place to Grosvenor Place ahead of the main column. A minor incident occurred in Grosvenor Place when these anarchists were attracted to a television van, on the roof of which were several cameramen. A banner and a few broken poles were hurled

at them and the van hurriedly drove away to escape further attention.

After rounding Hyde Park Corner, approximately 300 anarchists broke away from the main body, ran along Park Lane, and headed for the American Embassy (see page 8).

The main body of marchers, some 20,000 strong, continued along the North Carriageway and arrived at Speakers' Corner at 5.10 p.m. where a platform had been erected.

The meeting was chaired by Tariq ALI and speakers in order of appearance were:

Jan KAVAN ✓	(Czech)
Alain KREVINE ✓	(French)
Jim NICHOLLS ✓	(Independent Socialist Group)
Ernie TATE ✓	(Vietnam Solidarity Campaign)
Pat JORDAN ✓	(Vietnam Solidarity Campaign)
Jim HIGGINS ✓	(International Socialists)
Fergus NICHOLSON ✓	(Communist Party)
Barney DAVIS ✓	(Young Communist League)
George KILOH ✓	(Young Liberals)
Felix GREENE ✓	(American Film Producer)
Eamonn McCANN ✓	(Irish Workers Group)
Alan HARRIS ✓	(Vietnam Solidarity Campaign)

and a number of others who were unannounced and unidentified.

KAVAN merely expressed the support of the young people of Czechoslovakia for the demonstration.

KREVINE said that the revolutionary movement in Europe was growing, and that the only solution to the Vietnam War was outright victory for the Viet Cong.

NICHOLLS confined himself to linking the demonstration with the broader struggle to bring the socialist revolution to Britain.

TATE said that the marchers, by their actions had established that it was possible to mobilise people against the Vietnam War. He reminded the audience that this was not the end of their struggle, only the beginning.

Pat JORDAN declared that the demonstration was a great victory despite the provocations of the press with their advance publicity, and the police. He claimed that the march was an exhibition of discipline and determination to carry on the common struggle against the war in Vietnam. He went on to say that he hoped further marches would be even bigger and that the V.S.C. would extend its activities. Despite all that had been said, the V.S.C. had presented a united front. In concluding JORDAN said that the V.S.C.

Page No. 8.

must make the Government change its attitude towards the war in Vietnam and he and his colleagues intended to work to that end.

HIGGINS reminded the audience that they had come to demonstrate their solidarity with the National Liberation Front of the Vietnamese Revolution. There was, he said, a connection between the invasion of Czechoslovakia and the war in Vietnam as there was between the war in Vietnam and Biafra. The international ramifications of American Imperialism were plain for all to see. There was a universal struggle for liberalisation and the International Socialist Group was behind anyone struggling for freedom.

NICHOLSON remarked that the demonstration was the greatest ever and had shown that the people were determined to end the war in Vietnam. It also had proved that disciplined demonstrations could take place in the streets of London.

DAVIS said that his organisation, the Young Communist League, was part of a world wide movement which was against the Vietnamese war and announced that he had received a message of support from the Vietnamese Liberation Movement of South Vietnam.

KILOH mentioned that he had recently met Vietnamese officials in Berlin. He saw the demonstration as the beginning of a change in our society, a change which could be encouraged by disciplined militancy.

GREENE said that he had taken part in many similar demonstrations in America in the last few years and was therefore particularly glad to be present to-day. He agreed with Mao Tse Tung that America was a paper tiger.

MCCANN attacked the Labour Government and strongly criticised its "colonial policy". He praised the disciplined nature of the march and said it was reassuring that there had been no violent confrontation with police.

HARRIS appealed for support for the VIETNAM SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN as a means of changing the course of the struggle in Vietnam.

Tariq ALI, at 6.15 p.m. declared the meeting closed and the Internationale was sung.

The demonstrators then dispersed, but a number made their way towards Grosvenor Square.

Meanwhile, the Maoist section of the march, numbering some 500 supporters, had made their way from Trafalgar Square to Grosvenor Square behind the banner "BRITISH-VIETNAM SOLIDARITY FRONT". On their arrival, at the junction of Brook Street and the east side of the Square, police directed them around the south side where they stopped at the junction of South Audley Street. A police cordon across the road there prevented the demonstrators reaching their target - the U.S. Embassy. The contingent was joined later by anarchists and other supporters from the main march, swelling

Page No. 9.

the numbers to between 4,000 to 5,000. Two unidentified speakers addressed the assembly for about twenty minutes by use of a loud hailer and although nothing inflammatory was said, the purport of their remarks was that the U.S. Embassy stood as a symbol of all that was evil in the world and was responsible for the terrible events now taking place in Vietnam.

At 4.20 p.m. four demonstrators climbed onto scaffolding of the Grand Metropolitan Hotels construction at the south side of the square and Edward DAVOREN, who had led the contingent throughout, announced that a symbolic burning of the U.S. flag would take place. He handed a made-up flag to the four demonstrators on the scaffold who pinned it to the top of the 6'6" hoarding around the site. DAVOREN then set light to the flag but as soon as the flames began to reach up police took down the flag and stamped out the flames. Many of the demonstrators shouted, "Provocation!!" and forthwith DAVOREN tore up the flag and handed it to fellow demonstrators who set light to the pieces and attempted without much success to carry these on top of placards and sticks.

For about the next two hours this area became the scene of the only disorder of any consequence to occur during the day's events.

Frustrated by police from reaching the U.S. Embassy, the mood of the crowd became more aggressive and various missiles including coins were hurled into the police lines and at the windows of premises in South Audley Street a number of which were broken (it is not yet known the exact extent of damage caused).

Successive determined charges were made to break the police line and these were accompanied by the throwing of fire-works, small home-made bombs (see page 10), bottles, wooden staves, potatoes, shoes and other objects. At one stage a length of steel scaffolding was used as a battering ram against the police. Each attack on the police line was accompanied by a constant chant of "Ho ! Ho! Ho Chi Minh" from the demonstrators, but the attempts to break the cordon failed. During this period a number of police were injured. The more militant demonstrators, confined to the South Audley Street area, were eventually reduced to milling about without any cohesion.

At about 6.30 p.m. a wedge of police slowly pushed its way through the crowd forcing it into two groups, one down South Audley Street and the other towards the East end of Grosvenor Square.

The former group dispersed soon afterwards, and by 8 p.m. the only sizeable group remaining in the immediate area numbered a few hundred gathered on the south of Grosvenor Square near Carlos Place. By 9.15 p.m. this group, arguing amongst itself, had dwindled to about 150, and by 9.30 p.m. the area was completely cleared.

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Page No. 10.

Privacy ✓ the 'Black Power' advocate and Albert HANCHANDA, the Maoist, were seen taking a prominent part in these proceedings. HANCHANDA, together with a small group of five supporters carrying loud hailer were seen to leave the demonstration at 8 p.m.

During the mêlée a number of private cars and vans were used as "ambulances" to convey injured demonstrators from the scene. The index numbers of these vehicles are included in Appendix 'H'.

Seven home-made bombs which had been used by the demonstrators were recovered and are being examined by Explosives Officers. Although the sizes differed, most were about 3" diameter by 3" deep. They were similar in construction, each comprising two metal containers fitted one inside the other. The inner container was filled with black powder whilst the space between it and the larger, outer container was packed with a putty-like mixture and black powder. The detonator appeared to be a firework inserted through a hole in the container lids.

The devices were ineffective and the only result seemed to be that the lids of the bomb were blown off, thus preventing possible fragmentation. Home Office, Royal Arsenal Research and Development Establishment, Woolwich are also being asked to examine these objects.

From the beginning of the day's events the anarchist contingents had followed their usual, apparently unplanned and haphazard course of disruption, paying little or no heed to the blandishments of either the VIETNAM SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN or the Maoists.

Starting from the Victoria Embankment, a group of about 1,000 anarchists under the banner "UNITED LIBERTARIANS" accompanied the main march as far as Carmelite Street, where they left, only to rejoin the march after some discussion amongst themselves. As the demonstrators approached Australia House, the anarchists again left the main column, jog-trotting around the Aldwych before rejoining the march, and again in the Strand they made a detour by way of William IV Street, entering Trafalgar Square from the North where they pushed through the Maoists gathered there, ignoring their exhortations to support them, and rejoined the main column in Whitehall. As previously mentioned, a similar manoeuvre at Stag Place put them at the head of the main procession in Grosvenor Place where they proceeded at a fast pace, smashing glass in road bollards on their way.

At the South end of Park Lane the group succeeded in disrupting traffic by turning into the South Bound carriageway of the one-way system and a number of cars were here scratched and pummelled by the demonstrators. Finally several hundred of them left the main body in Park Lane and made for Grosvenor Square where they were prominent in the disorder which ensued.

As a small counter-balance to these various pro-Viet Cong activities about 50 youths carrying the United States flag and

chanting pro-American slogans appeared in Trafalgar Square shortly after 3 p.m. They then made their way via Lower Regent Street to Piccadilly Circus where they posed for photographs before marching to the vicinity of Grosvenor Square. The number involved had swelled to about 200 en route but after again posing for photographs and singing Rule Britannia they dispersed at about 3.45 p.m. and were not involved in the events which followed.

During the whole of the day's events it was estimated that some 25,000 demonstrators were involved. The majority were well-disciplined and acted in an orderly manner under the directions of VIETNAM SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN marshals.

The minority anarchist and Maoist factions, however, were intent upon violence even before the day's events began. Together, they numbered between 4,000 and 5,000 but their actions lacked unity, their plans were ill-conceived and they were well contained by uniformed police. It is fortunate that internal, factional squabbling amongst the leading violent agitators prevented a cohesive show of force.

Prior to the march, 26 persons were arrested and three summoned for various offences committed on their way to the demonstration. During the demonstration 17 persons were arrested (all during the Maoist/anarchist fracas in Grosvenor Square) and one person was arrested following the demonstration for throwing a bottle at the American Embassy. Apart from three fascists, none had hitherto come to notice. All these arrests are listed at Appendix "E".

During the disturbances in Grosvenor Square, at least 14 police officers were injured, seven of them requiring hospital treatment, but the number of civilian casualties is not as yet known.

In comparison with the similar demonstration held on 17th March, foreign participation was on this occasion much reduced. Information from ports prior to the demonstration showed that 71 foreign nationals who were definitely or probably intending to take part had entered the country, and eight foreign journalists had arrived to cover the event. Of these the largest contingents came from France (13) and Germany (12). It is, of course, more than probable that many more attended the demonstration without being identified as likely participants at the port of entry but the largest body of foreign demonstrators identified as such during the march was that of Italy, numbering about 30 and this was well-behaved throughout. Only one foreign national was arrested before the demonstration ([redacted] Privacy for possessing a gas pistol and drugs - see Appendix "E") and none was arrested during the demonstration itself.

At Appendix 'J' are copies of each item of literature distributed during the demonstration. Of this literature only one leaflet appears worthy of special mention.

Page No. 12 

This is a reproduction of information extracted from the book "The Espionage Establishment", recently published in America, giving information concerning the heads and addresses of M.I.5 and M.I.6. The leaflet bears no printers' name and the distributors were not identified.

A. Cunningham
CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT.

Index to Appendices

- 'A' Organisations originally represented on V.S.C. Ad Hoc Committee.
- 'B' List of "target" premises.
- 'C' Organisations identified as having taken part in demonstration.
- 'D' Slogans used by demonstrators.
- 'E' Persons arrested.
- 'F' Persons mentioned in report.
- 'G' Persons identified during demonstration.
- 'H' Motor vehicles used on demonstration.
- 'J' Literature distributed during demonstration.